

American Medico-psychological Association





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Propositions of the Association.

The Association of Medical Superintendents of American Institutions for the Insane was established in 1844 with the object of advancing in every practicable manner the best interests of the insane, and the members are "the Medical Superintendents of the various incorporated or other legally constituted institutions for the insane, now existing on this Continent or which may be commenced prior to the next meeting, and all those who have heretofore been Medical Superintendents and members of this Association or who may be hereafter appointed to those stations." It is the oldest medical organization of a national character on this Continent.

This Association has at different times adopted propositions on the construction and organization of hospitals for the insane, and on all matters bearing on the welfare of the insane which have received the most unqualified approval of those best capable of judging in Great Britain, and they have also been received with high praise in France. These propositions, when presented as the report of a committee appointed to draw them up have always been most rigidly and carefully examined and discussed, and after such examination and discussion of every important word in every sentence they have been unanimously adopted, not, as some would say and have said, because they were proposed by the most prominent members, and the others did not care to discuss them, but because they received the cordial endorsement of every member from the fact that they fully and clearly expressed the sentiments of each member, and "may be regarded as the well established results of very

varied, extensive and long continued observations in nearly every section of the country and among all classes of patients." The first series of propositions on the construction of hospitals for the insane was adopted in 1851, and so well and so carefully were they matured that in only one of that number has any change been made, and to that change attention will be given at a subsequent time. The second series was adopted in 1853, and relates to the organization of hospitals for the insane. To these propositions special attention and consideration will be given in this and subsequent articles, so to explain them and enforce the reasons which led to their adoption, as to convince those who will carefully consider the points presented that "the crude theories and the visionary suggestions which are frequently met with" need the sure foundation of experience and practicable observation which can most certainly and unquestionably be found in these propositions. It may be stated also as a cardinal principle from which no deviation has yet been made that the Association has always held its meetings in some town or city where a hospital for the insane was located, so that the members may have the opportunity of examining the peculiarities of arrangement and management in detail, characteristic of the institutions in different sections of the country, and be thus enabled to profit by what has been done by others engaged in the "noble cause:"

1. "Every Hospital for the Insane should be in the country not within less than two miles of a large town and easily accessible at all seasons."

Every one will admit that the inmates of a hospital should be placed in the most favorable circumstances for the promotion of their welfare, and that their surroundings should be as far as possible free from every source of annoyance or whatever might tend to produce unpleasant impressions, and these can best be attained in the country, away from the bustle and confusion of a town, and the close proximity of those careless, idle, vicious and thoughtless people sometimes found in towns, whose conduct, conversation, general character and habits would certainly not have a very beneficial influence on

persons of disordered minds, filled with all sorts of vagaries and distempered fancies, but would rather tend to increase and strengthen such irregular action.

There is unfortunately in certain classes a morbid inclination to ridicule the peculiarities of manner, conduct and conversation of the Insane, and to annoy and irritate them in a variety of ways, and that would most surely be done by the idle and thoughtless; and a very prejudicial effect would thus be produced on the Insane, should any hospital be placed so near a town as to enable such persons easily to visit it or to meet the patients when they were walking for exercise and recreation.

It may be said that the arrangements of a hospital should be such as to prevent such classes having access in any way to the patients, but while that is very true in theory, it is often found very difficult to regulate in practice from the known disposition of many to attempt to do what is forbidden, simply because it is forbidden; and the experience of every one familiar with the management of a hospital teaches the extreme care which must be constantly exercised even when a hospital is situated at some distance from a town, to prevent the communication of improper persons with the patients. Such persons seek opportunities to convey to the patients articles they should not have and with which they may do injury to themselves or to others, and also to tell them what will irritate and excite or otherwise injure them.

But in a pleasant position in the country, an extensive landscape, with a variety of natural scenery of hill, cultivated fields, wood and water, and sufficient of the outward moving world in view, but not in close contact, to give animation to the scene, a greater degree of fresh air can be obtained, greater opportunities for exercise unmolested can be enjoyed, with extensive and beautifully ornamented grounds immediately adjoining the buildings, to attract and divert the attention at all times, and also a good farm and garden.

Accessibility at all seasons is very necessary, not only for the convenience of those who are required to bring patients to the institution, but for those whose business requires them to

visit the hospital at regular periods, and for the easy procuring of those supplies of every kind which enter so largely into the daily consumption in such institutions; and in these days when railroads are so ramified into every section of the country, it is not very difficult to obtain near the centre of population and of railroad facilities such a location as will answer nearly if not quite all the requirements of the proposition.

This seems the proper place to consider a proposition adopted in 1866 referring to this subject of the proper location of a hospital:

“The large States should be divided into geographical districts of such size that a hospital situated at or near the centre of the district will be practically accessible to all the people living within its boundaries, and available for their benefit in case of mental disorder.

From a carefully prepared statement made after a thorough examination of all the reports of the different hospitals in the country by Dr. Edward Jarvis, of Dorchester, Massachusetts (the able statistician and pioneer in all matters of the kind on the subject of insanity in this country), it would seem to be established as a fact not admitting of any doubt or dispute that the majority of all the patients in any given hospital come from the section of country most contiguous to the institution, the facilities of travel being always considered.

If a Hospital for the Insane be located as near as may be, having regard to the facilities of communication between different parts of the district in the centre of the population, great expense will be saved in the conveyance to, and the removal from, the hospital of those who may require its accommodations, and this item of travelling expense is a very serious one in the majority of cases. Then again the risk to the individual from the fatigue, the excitement and the annoyance attending a journey of any length in a weak and depressed or in a violently excited condition is often very great and attended with considerable danger to life.

The friends and relations of the patients in any Hospital for the Insane often very naturally desire to visit them and exam-

ine into their condition, more particularly when the case has assumed the chronic form, and the expenses of a long journey often press heavily on their means, especially where the support of the person in the hospital has to be defrayed, in whole or in part, from the amount they derive from their daily labor. The same reasoning will also apply to the authorities of the townships or counties, who are necessarily required to look after the welfare of those intrusted to their charge.

Every hospital should also be located in the centre of population of the district, because the most thickly settled sections are those wherein the largest number of Insane will be found; and in those parts also will be more readily found those who will be relied on for the various occupations and employments in such institutions, and there also can be had more economically all those supplies of different kinds which are required in the domestic economy of the institution, and the communications between different sections by railroad will also in all probability be more complete and satisfactory.

2. "No hospital for the Insane, however limited its capacity, should have less than fifty acres of land, devoted to garden and pleasure grounds for its patients. At least one hundred acres should be possessed by every State Hospital or other institution, for two hundred patients, to which number these propositions apply unless otherwise mentioned."

The reasons for requiring a given amount of land in connection with every Hospital for the Insane may be briefly stated to be the necessity for exercise and recreation immediately adjoining the building, a large garden for the supply and cultivation of all the vegetables required in an institution of the kind, so that they shall be fresh and in abundant quantity at all times, and in a State Hospital a large farm, so that a large stock of cows may be kept for the supply of fresh milk. These necessarily require that a large amount of hay, grain and vegetables be provided for their use, as well as for the other stock which may be required to enable the operations to be carried on with proper economy, and for the stock cattle,

which many institutions which kill their own beef find it necessary and advantageous to feed.

In the cultivation of the farm and garden an opportunity will be given for the employment of a number of the patients for whom such occupation is required, that they may have some regular occupation to divert their minds, and improve their bodily health, and prevent their sinking into a dull lethargic condition, or wasting the energies which should be given to active exercise in mischievous destructiveness of various kinds. Into this question of labor by the Insane it is not intended here to enter, as it requires a more extended consideration, which may be given at another time, but only to indicate the fact that every hospital should be fully provided with all the means necessary for carrying into effect any such system of labor.

3. "Means should be provided to raise ten thousand gallons of water daily to reservoirs that will supply the highest parts of the building."

Where practicable it is always safest and best to have the reservoirs on an elevation near the building or within convenient distance, but where that cannot be done the tanks should be made of boiler iron, placed in the building above all the occupied portions so as readily to supply every department with water, and so arranged that any leakage from breaking or disorder of pipes or valves or the condensation on the tanks may be conveyed away and prevent injury to the ceilings or other parts of the building.

An abundance of fresh, pure water is an absolute requisite in every hospital, and the utmost care and attention is demanded to secure such a supply as will prove constant in all seasons, and as little subject as possible to variations dependent on the rainfall in any section.

The experience of the last few years has abundantly demonstrated that it is not safe to rely entirely on springs, however inexhaustible they may have been considered, but recourse should be had to a large stream or river, so that while the

fresh water supply may be had from one part of the stream, the sewage of the institution may be carried into the same stream at a point far below that from which the fresh supply is drawn.

No subject connected with the location of a hospital has apparently received so little consideration as the supply of water and the disposal of the sewage, and no subject is attended with greater sources of annoyance and vexation to the management and risk to the health and lives of the inmates.

No good can be attained by reference to special instances where these matters have been overlooked in the original selection of a location, but it will be admitted by all familiar with the subject that very serious annoyances have been suffered and large expenditures of money have been required to remedy defects which could easily have been avoided by more care, attention and forethought in the original selection. Unfortunately the evil is not confined to the selection of sites for Hospitals for the Insane, but will be found in a very large number of buildings intended for the accommodation of different classes and conditions, both healthy and diseased.

4. "No Hospital for the Insane should be built without the plan having been first submitted to some physician or physicians who have had charge of a similar establishment or are practically acquainted with all the details of their arrangement, and received his or their full approbation."

The principle involved in this proposition is founded on the general experience of mankind, that those who have given most time, thought and attention to any given matter are best qualified to give advice on that matter, or that when any work requires special skill and mechanical or professional knowledge the persons best calculated to do or direct that particular work most satisfactorily will be those who have had largest and longest experience in that particular branch.

But we are told by official authority that it is not worth while to take advice from persons familiar with the details of the construction and arrangement of Hospitals for the Insane,



because their minds will be biased by personal interest and convenience.

Do those who seriously put forth such a declaration consider the force and extent of their own declaration, which would clearly debar them from giving advice in any case falling under their care because their personal interest in that case would surely bias their judgment?

It will be claimed, and must be admitted, that where this proposition has been set aside and institutions built without such counsel and advice, the result has proved the wisdom of those who insisted on the adoption of this proposition. In the very nature of things it must be so, and mankind will always continue to act on this principle in all important matters in defiance of every plausible pretext to make them believe the contrary. No man nor any set of men would build a factory, an iron furnace or any building for any special purpose without fully and carefully consulting with those who were most familiar with the special character of the work to be done in that building; nor would any set of men think of erecting a hospital for the ordinary sick without first examining the plan and arrangements of the best institutions of the kind to be found, and obtaining in the construction of plans and buildings the advice of those most familiar with that class of buildings. As a Hospital for the Insane is different from an ordinary hospital in the greater part of its arrangements designed for the treatment of a special class of diseases, and therefore requiring special adaptations for special purposes in the different portions of the institution, it is but reasonable to insist that those who have been most familiar by long residence and observation in such institutions, and understanding more fully what will be most essentially necessary to secure in the most effective manner the objects of the institution, are best qualified to give advice in the preparation of the plans and to superintend the erection of such buildings.

Experience has proved, and will continue to prove to the end of time, that where the plans have been prepared and the buildings erected under the supervision of those most familiar

with the details of construction of Hospitals for the Insane, the buildings have been not only better constructed and arranged for the purpose of their erection, and the money has been expended more judiciously and economically and with a higher regard to the interests of those by whom and for whom the hospital has been built than where the contrary plan has been adopted.

The statement has been made time and again that the superintendents are responsible for the lavish outlay which it is claimed has been made in many Hospitals for the Insane in this country. That some superintendents may have erred in this direction may not be denied, because they are subject to errors of judgment like other men, and may be biased in favor of particular plans and persuaded to their adoption by a desire to conciliate those with whom they may be associated, or for whom they may be acting. But in this, as in many other things, they have been made to bear the blame of what strictly belonged to others who overruled them.

It will be found on careful inquiry and examination that the architect employed has been desirous of making an elevation which would reflect special credit on his taste and ability to prepare such plans, and that the Commissioners for building have been biased in their judgment by the persuasions of the architect and the community in which the institution has been located, and have consented in order to gratify the desire of the people of that section for a building which should be an ornament to their locality, to the erection of more costly and more showy buildings, requiring a greater degree of ornamentation, and consequently a greater expenditure of money for really unnecessary matters than they had intended.

The Association, aware of this tendency, gave expression to their views in the following very decided terms: "That these institutions, especially if provided at the public cost, should always be of a plain but substantial character; and while characterized by good taste, and furnished with everything essential to the health and comfort and successful treat-

ment of the patients, all extravagant embellishment and every unnecessary expenditure should be carefully avoided."

The true principle is clearly expressed in this proposition that the building should be in accordance with good taste, and a chaste and correct taste rejects excessive embellishment, and therefore all undue and consequently unnecessary ornamentation should be avoided, and special care and thought should be given to make the interior of the building which is to be occupied by the patients in the highest degree, homelike and comfortable, and adorned with everything which can tend to give pleasure to the eye, diversion to the mind and a feeling of general contentment and satisfaction to the individual.

Everything in and around the institution should minister to the grand object for which the hospital was built, the relief and restoration of those placed in its care, and no amount of money judiciously and thoughtfully expended for such purposes can ever be regarded as excessive or misplaced.

In addition to this it should always be borne in mind that in all buildings erected at the public expense, the money is drawn from the people by taxation, and they have a clear and undoubted right to insist that that money shall be carefully and economically spent only for the purpose for which it was appropriated, and not to gratify the vanity or contribute to the advantage of any particular individual, and when a full equivalent is rendered for the amount appropriated, it will be found that those for whom it was spent will be satisfied with the expenditure.

5. "The highest number that can with propriety be treated in one building is two hundred and fifty, while two hundred is a preferable maximum."

It is believed that no one will call in question the truth embodied in this proposition, that the best results for the Insane themselves—and their interests alone, are those which claim paramount importance in this discussion—are to be obtained by an adherence to the principle that a small number can best receive that care and attention which will most surely promote their res-

toration, for the very plain reason that the physician will be able more carefully to study out their special ideas and peculiarities, and the bodily condition which may have influence in the production and continuance of the disorder, and thus be more fully qualified to direct the varied means which may be most influential in the promotion of the object sought to be obtained. It is admitted that many men claim that they can give as full attention to a much larger number, but without any intention of disparaging their great ability and attainments in this respect, we make free to say that they do not do it by personal attention and regular visitation each day.

Motives of expediency, however, led to the adoption in 1866 of the following proposition, which received a majority vote just at the close of the session of that year:

"The enlargement of a city, county, or State Institution for the Insane, which in the extent and character of the district in which it is situated, is conveniently accessible to all the people of such district may be properly carried as required to the extent of accommodating six hundred patients, embracing the usual proportion of curable and incurable Insane in a particular community."

The reasons urged for this change were that legislative bodies could never be brought to the point of agreeing to the erection of so large a number of hospitals as would be required by the terms of the original resolution, and that some concessions must be made to their views in order to obtain the needed accommodations for the Insane.

Many persons consider that in large institutions with the number at its maximum, the majority of the patients must necessarily be of a class requiring little medical treatment, and that the care of these can be transferred to the Assistant Physician, and that the Superintendent should only be required to give his special attention to that class of recent cases requiring special medical care.

We hold it to be the bounden duty of every Superintendent to make such a careful daily visit to all those committed to his

charge, that he shall be familiar with their mental and physical condition, and his practiced eye will enable him to judge what changes, if any, may have taken place in each individual, and he will be able to recognize traits and symptoms which those less familiar with the Insane would overlook. Not only justice to the Insane themselves, but to those by whom they were placed in the institution, demands that such special personal care be given, not to insist on the obligation which rests on every medical man to devote the best energies of his mind to the care of those for whom, by the very terms of his appointment, he is made special guardian and protector. Such a duty cannot be ignored, and should not be delegated, but performed under a full sense of all the responsibility involved.

The duties of the Superintendent in this regard are thus expressed in another proposition:

"He should have the entire control of the medical, moral, and dietetic treatment of the patients. The unreserved power of appointment and discharge of all persons engaged in their care, and should exercise a general supervision and direction of every department of the institution."

To the full scope of this proposition many well-meaning persons object, and insist that the duties of the Superintendent should be confined simply and exclusively to the medical department, and that the business arrangements should be conducted by a Steward or other officer, who should have control in all that class of matters. In urging such a plan these well-intentioned people overlook some very important considerations.

No institution can be successfully managed by two persons. There must be one authority to which all others must be obedient, so that all parts shall work in harmony, and aim steadily and unvaryingly at the production of the best results.

This practice of divided authority was tried in the early history of the country, when the management of the institutions was patterned after the English hospital, but it has been gradually abandoned, and even in Great Britain it has been steadily



changing, year by year, so as to conform to the plan of having one responsible head to which all others shall be amenable.

While such a principle might under peculiar circumstances be made to answer without extraordinary friction in a general hospital, there are peculiarities about a Hospital for the Insane which render it absolutely essential to the proper administration of all its parts that one leading governing mind should direct the whole intricate mechanism.

No man who can lay claim to any correct knowledge of the treatment of the Insane in these days, will pretend to say that the medical means are those on which alone or principally he relies for success in the efforts made to restore those committed to his charge, or to give the greatest degree of mental health and comfort to those who may not be looked upon as likely to reach that point.

It is admirably expressed in the proposition quoted as the medical, moral, and dietetic treatment. It must be admitted that, as all mental disorders are dependent on, or caused by, disordered action of the organ through which the manifestations of mind are made known to us, and as those disordered conditions may arise from diseased or disordered action of different organs of the body, acting directly or sympathetically on the brain and nervous system, medical means must be resorted to calculated to remove all diseased conditions and restore the disordered functions to their normal healthy action, and very often that will include the greater part of the treatment required.

But as the larger part of the disorders are often traceable to defective nutrition in some of its many forms, the necessity is imperative that the proper food should be administered in conjunction with the medical means, so as to bring up the system to a more vigorous and healthy condition and thus placed in the most advantageous position to throw off and resist all unnatural states. To have these two modes of treatment work together satisfactorily and efficiently, it will be granted by all reasonable men, that they should be entirely controlled by the Superintendent and Physician, who alone is

capable of judging what is best calculated for the benefit of his patients, and to direct what kind and character of food is best suited to the different cases, which come under his care, and for whose treatment he alone is held responsible.

But in addition to these, there are in the mind certain desires, affections, passions and emotions, which require to be acted upon by repression or stimulation, or in that way which will be most conducive to the ultimate welfare and relief of the patient, and in the moral treatment are included all those appliances which may, in every practicable manner be made subservient to that end.

These appliances include all those means of diversion, recreation and exercise of mind and body which may assist in changing the current of thought from an unnatural to a natural channel, and develop more healthy action of the different organs of the body. Among these will be found working in the garden, on the farm or any other form of manual labor to which men have been accustomed, and which may be most suitable for the individual in the condition he may be at the time, and whatever form of outdoor or indoor game or amusement or occupation can be made most available.

For women all the infinite diversity of occupation from the lightest form of fancy work in all its varying grades, to more active duty in the various departments of household employments, and for both classes, music, lectures, exhibitions of the magic lantern with the almost endless combination of views of scenery and objects of interest of every kind which may now be had, together with whatever may be found most conducive to the object to be attained, and most in conformity with the habits, inclinations, tastes and education of the different classes for which the institution was designed.

It must be clear to any thinking man that in order to the proper execution of all these different forms of treatment, they must all be directed by one mind which can best know by a careful study of and attention to the peculiar character of each individual just what will be best adapted to that particular

case. It will be as readily seen that where these different modes may be left to be executed by two different men there will be the strongest likelihood of a difference of opinion as to the proper manner in which the plans should be carried out, and an equally strong probability that no successful plan will be put in full operation. Experience teaches that this is no mere fancy sketch or picture of the imagination, but has had in the past, and has now in the actual present, its living reality in more than one institution.

But it is asserted by the advocates of this theory that where a medical man's mind is occupied with the oversight of the garden and the farm, he cannot give proper attention to his medical duties. Do those who make this assertion consider that it is as necessary for the healthy action of every medical man's mind that he should have a diversity of mental occupation as that he should have proper nourishing food to support his bodily strength? Is it not a fact supported by the amplest evidence, that every man who confines his thoughts and attention to one thing constantly becomes thereby a man of only one idea, while men who have a variety of duties to perform, mingle in the world of thought and action, and by contact with different classes of men see the variety of ways in which things are done, and hear the wonderful diversity of views which men entertain, and the peculiar modes of thought and expression which prevail become thereby more enlarged in their ideas, have a more comprehensive grasp and are better able to understand the varying changes of thought and feeling which they may meet in those entrusted to their charge, and therefore much better qualified to deal with the almost endless variety of disordered mental action which may come before them to be properly directed and led along into more healthy channels?

Besides every man needs a certain amount of physical exercise, and if he cannot obtain it by looking after the farm and garden and various other outdoor matters, he will be compelled to take it in some other form which may draw him away more effectually from his duties at the hospital. Then also it must be remembered that by the very nature of his position, the

Superintendent of a Hospital for the Insane is in a great measure debarred from many of those social enjoyments and recreation which other medical men can enjoy; and that, in place of being tied down to an unvarying routine of duties, such as these gentlemen would so kindly prescribe for him, he is entitled to lead that kind of life which best accords with his own ideas of duty to the hospital, to society and to his own family, to enjoy liberty in the way he may feel most conducive to his health and to the welfare of those committed to his charge; and to engage in the pursuit of happiness in all those modes which, may, while fulfilling strictly and conscientiously the duties of his position enable him to realize most fully that

“Not enjoyment and not sorrow
Is our destined end or way
But to act, that each to-morrow
Find us farther than to-day.”

